



Guidelines for the Control of Suspected or Confirmed Outbreaks of Viral Gastroenteritis (Norovirus) in Long Term Care Facilities

The following guidelines and recommendations have been developed to help stop the spread of viral gastroenteritis (norovirus) in long term care facilities. Facilities should be made aware that these viruses are highly contagious and can cause large outbreaks that are difficult to contain. Strict adherence to these preventive measures is necessary. These measures should be continued until the outbreak is over, i.e., when no signs or symptoms exist for five days within facility.

1. Isolate ill residents from others by confining them to their rooms until three days after their last symptoms. Group ill persons together if possible. Suspend activities where ill and well residents would be together. Group activities should be kept to a minimum, or postponed.
2. Exclude from work ALL staff that are ill with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Ill staff should remain away from work for a minimum of three days following the disappearance of symptoms.
3. Conduct staff meetings to educate staff on enteric precautions, isolation measures, personal hygiene, disinfection, handwashing, glove use, linen handling, proper laundering, droplet precautions for vomitus, and avoiding aerosolization of virus.
4. Ill residents should be served meals in their room. Discontinue self-service in the cafeteria/dining room to minimize food handling by residents.
5. Minimize the flow of staff between sick and well residents. Staff should be assigned to work with either well or sick residents, but should not care for both groups. (Staff who go between ill and well residents, or who work on multiple units or wings, play an important role in transmitting the virus from resident to resident.)
6. Staff should wear gloves when caring for ill residents or when touching potentially contaminated surfaces. Gloves should be discarded and hands washed **immediately** after completing patient care.
7. Staff should wash their hands when entering and leaving **every** resident room.
8. Masks should be worn when caring for residents who are vomiting
9. Designate cleaning teams to clean all surfaces (e.g., handrails, doorknobs, faucets, bath rails, PT/OT equipment etc.) with an appropriate germicidal product. Continue with twice daily bleach water cleaning of surfaces and objects by housekeeping.
10. It may be prudent to restrict visitations and to suspend new admissions (particularly compromised individuals) until the outbreak is over.

Nursing units should immediately report any residents or staff members with symptoms of viral gastroenteritis to the appropriate administrator, and notify their local health department. Facilities should instruct staff to document in the chart any reports of nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. New cases should be recorded daily using a case log to help with the outbreak investigation (name, age, room #, onset date, symptoms, duration of illness, etc.) Health Department staff can provide consultation or assistance, and also arrange for laboratory testing of residents and staff.